SIERRA COUNTY

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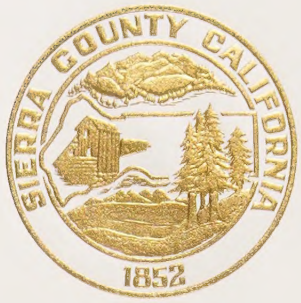

Tim H. Beals
Director

January 3, 1996

1/16/96

Ronald Heckart, Head Librarian
University of California, Berkeley
Institute of Governmental Studies
109 Moses Hall #2370
Berkeley, CA 94720-2370

Dear Mr. Heckart:

Enclosed is a copy of the 1987 Housing Element of the Sierra County General Plan per your request. If you have any questions regarding the Housing Element, I can be reached at (916) 289-3251.

Sincerely,

Tim Wong

Tim Wong
Planner II

TW: 1/3
enclosure

HOUSING ELEMENT CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Housing Element represents a revision to the previous Housing Element to the Sierra County General Plan adopted in 1970. It is part of the local commitment to provide safety, adequate, and decent housing for every Californian and must be recognized as a guidance document to identify and define housing problems and to determine what actions may be taken or programs undertaken to improve them.

Sierra County's existing housing stock represents a legacy of the County's historical growth and development patterns. In large part, it consists of old, wood frame, single family homes, built to standards which today are considered "below code." In constrast, the last decade has shown a strong growth in the construction of modern new homes and the placement of mobilehomes in the County. This report will examine the characteristics of the existing housing stock, with the intent of determining how adequately it provides the required housing functions for the County's residents.

Sierra County may well be expecting to experience a dramatic change. Growth influence from Reno, Nevada and the Nevada County, California areas has fostered speculation in the housing market and in the subdivision of land for further housing sites.

PURPOSE

The Housing Element is the basic, local policy statement on housing needs from which specific requests for assistance may be evaluated.

The purpose of the Housing Element is two-fold: (1) it is a way of avoiding future housing problems; and (2) it is a way of offering solutions for current housing problems. This Housing Element will guide to retain the rural character of the County and to preserve the independent lifestyles through promotion of housing development and restoration activities which are suited to the County economy, climate, and culture. The Housing Element will address current housing problems and will suggest measures to resolve them.

STATE HOUSING POLICY

The Housing Element guidelines are prescribed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and these regulations are binding on all counties. The housing goal of the State of California to allow for the attainment of a decent home and satisfying environment for every Californian requires the cooperative participation of the private and public sectors of the economy in efforts to expand housing opportunities.

The needs for every Californian identified in the State housing goal are:

1) Provision of housing which is structurally sound, water-tight and weather-tight, with adequate cooking and plumbing facilities, heat, light and ventilation.

2) Housing containing enough rooms to provide reasonable privacy for its occupants.

3) Housing is within the economic means of the households who occupy it.

4) Housing is not unavailable because of discriminatory practices.

5) Housing is situated in an environment which does not endanger the health, safety, and well-being of its occupants and which provides convenient access to employment as well as adequate services and facilities.

GENERAL PLAN AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

The requirement that the Housing Element be included as a mandatory component of the local General Plan reflects a legislative recognition that local planning and housing program commitments play an integral role in pursuit of the State housing goal.

The goals of the Housing Element can be strongly influenced by land use controls of other mandatory general plan elements. Housing amount, type, size, cost, and location are all influenced by these elements. A major amount of emphasis is being placed on preserving independent lifestyles and the rural character of the County, thus it will be necessary to allow alternative housing types for families of all incomes.

The County is a member of the Sierra Planning Organization (Areawide Clearinghouse for Placer, El Dorado, Nevada, Sierra Counties) and this Housing Element will enhance the planning process on an inter-county level and will allow the opportunity to coordinate the land use and Housing Elements of the County as well as the jurisdictions within the Sierra Planning Organization.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The Housing Element provided for continuous public involvement in all phases of preparation.

During the early stages of overall General Plan revision, a 35 member citizens advisory committee was created. This committee represented the eight (8) unincorporated population centers in the County and was composed of a cross-section of interests, income brackets, and professional endeavors. Monthly meetings were held nd the following sequence of involvement took place:

1) Identification of goals and objectives.

2) Analysis and synthesis of background data.

3) Creation of policy statements for consideration.

4) Public hearing on goals, objectives and policies.

5) Recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Public involvement in the Housing Element as well as the overall General Plan revision has been valuable and effective and opportunities for review and comment have been adequately provided at all levels.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions will be used in designing the Housing Element:

1) The western portion of Sierra County will continue to be a desirable location for retirement and second home purchases and home construction.

2) The communities of Sierra City, Loyalton, and Verdi will continue to accommodate most new residential development.

3) There will be increasing private interest in developing the community of Verdi and the Long Valley area as Reno suburbs.

4) Some current constraints to residential development may not be relievable in certain communities and this will subsequently limit housing construction in those areas.

5) Some portion of the County housing demand will continue to be seasonal in nature.

6) Increasing land exchanges for National Forest System Lands in and near existing community areas could provide for additional lands for housing construction.

HOUSING PROFILE

Sierra County consists of 958 square miles, of which approximately 60% falls under jurisdiction of the United States Government. The population of Sierra County is primarily concentrated in nine unincorporated communities and the City of Loyalton, which is incorporated. These unincorporated communities include Alleghany, Pike, Goodyears Bar, Downieville, Sierra City, Sattley, Calpine, Sierraville and Verdi.

In July of 1976, the State of California conducted a special census which estimated a total County population of approximately 2,951. This estimate indicated that the City of Loyalton accounts for 33% and the unincorporated areas account for 68%.

This section of the Housing Element presents the past and current status of the population in terms of its age, household, and income characteristics and an inventory of housing and market factors (cost, supply, and demand).

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

The immediate needs are shown in the 1970 Federal and 1976 State census materials.

A compilation of data derived from the 1970 Federal census generated several findings and conclusions with regard to housing conditions in Sierra County. Those significant conclusions follow:

Housing Costs Some People Too Much

The median income for Sierra County was $8,543 in 1970. A family was classified by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) as "low income" if they had an annual income of less than $6,834 (80% of the median income). A family was classified as "very low income" if they had an annual income of less than $4,272 (50% of the median income). It is estimated from Table that of those families with "low" incomes, twenty were paying more than 25% of their incomes for housing in 1970. It is estimated that of those families with "very low" incomes, seventy-five were paying "too much" for housing. It is also estimated that 128 renter households were paying more than 20% of their incomes for rent.

Some Households Were Crowded

If a housing unit contained more than 1.01 persons per room, it was considered "overcrowded" by the Department of Housing and Community Development. According to that standard, 73 units were overcrowded in 1970. A conclusion may be drawn that this is not a problem.

Some Houses Were Not In Safe Condition

If a house "endangered the health, safety or well-being" of its occupants but was economical to repair, the Department of Housing and Community Development considers it to be in need of "rehabilitation." According to the housing condition survey carried out by the Sierra Economic Development District in 1971, 19% of the units surveyed needed rehabilitation. Assuming the survey was representative of the County's housing stock, about 295 units needed repair.

If a house "endangered the health, safety or well-being" of its occupants and was not economical to repair, the Depratment of Housing and Community Development considered it to be in need of "replacement." According to the Sierra Economic Development District survey, 6% of the housing units were in need of replacement. Again assuming that the survey was representative of the County's housing stock, about 93 units needed to be demolished and replaced.

Some Households Had Special Needs

Applying the previous income standards to a special tabulation of the 1970 Census, the following number of renter households were identified as needy:

Elderly:

14 one person households with incomes under $2,000
7 one person households with incomes between $2,000 and $3,000
5 one person households with incomes between $3,000 and $5,000.

Large Families:

10 five person households with incomes under $2,000.

Minority Non-Elderly:

Negligible.

Applying the previous income standards to a special tabulation of the 1970 Census, the following number of owner households were identified as needy:

Elderly:

32 one person households with incomes under $2,000
4 two person households with incomes under $2,000
9 two person households with incomes between $2,000 and $3,000.

Large Families:

5 six person households with incomes between $5,000 and $6,834.

Minority Non-Elderly

Negligible.

A compilation of data from the 1976 State Census generated additional findings and conclusions with regard to housing in Sierra County. Those are as follows:

Housing Costs Some People Too Much

The median income for Sierra County was $8,602 in 1976. Applying the previous definitions of "low income" and "very low income," a "low" income family was earning $6,882 annually and a "very low" income family was making $4,301 per year. It is estimated from a special tabulation of the 1976 Special Census that of those households with "low" incomes, only two were paying more than a quarter of their incomes for housing. It is also estimated that of those households with "very low" incomes, 31 were paying more than 25% of their incomes for housing. See Table

Overcrowding and Housing Condition

The 1976 Special Census did not survey that information.

Special Needs

No large families were paying more than a quarter of their incomes for housing. 337 families or about 39% of all the households surveyed in Sierra County earned less than $5,000 per year in 1976. The greatest proportion of these households were couples over 65 years of age, being retired and on fixed incomes.

Housing Shortage

Housing at all price levels is experiencing a shortage and this can be attributed to a variety of factors:

1) shortage of developable sites;

2) low vacancy rate;

3) geologic and topographic characteristics;

4) County zoning; and

5) land ownership.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Income Spent for Housing (1970)

	Annual Income (Average)							
	Less Than $2,000	$2,000-$2,999	$3,000-$4,999	$5,000-$6,999	$7,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	$15,000-$24,999	$25,000 Or More
Less Than 10%	0	0	0	7	5	34	11	0
10% - 14%	0	0	0	5	10	4	4	0
15% - 19%	6	13	0	5	23	0	0	0
20% - 24%	0	0	13	15	5	0	0	0
25% - 34%*	7	5	17	12	0	0	0	0
35% or More*	42	12	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Computed	10	0	5	5	5	0	0	5

*According to the Department of Housing and Community Development, these families could be paying too much for housing.

FUTURE NEEDS

Current Housing Inventory

Housing Supply, July 1976

	Total	Owner	Renter
1. Occupied Housing Units	1,201	801	400
2. Available Vacant Units		- Negligible -	
3. Total Vacant Units (primarily second homes)	627	-	-
4. Total Housing Supply	1,828	1,365	463

Changes in Housing Supply, July 1976 - December 1977

	Total	Owner	Renter
5. Additions (starts)	51	51	-
6. Losses (demolitions)		- Negligible -	
7. Estimated Housing Supply	1,879	1,416	463
8. Total Vacant Units	627	-	-
9. Estimated Occupied Housing Supply	1,252	-	-

Expected Household Formations

Projection of Household Formations, 1978-1985

1. Projected total population, 1985	3,600
2. Projected population of group quarters	50
3. Projected population in housing units	3,650
4. Estimated average population per household	2.45
5. Projected number of households, 1985	1,490
6. Estimated number of occupied units, 1978	1,252
7. Estimated number of low household formations, January 1978 - December 1985	238

Housing Requirements

Projection of Housing Requirements, January 1978 - December 1985

	Total	Owner	Renter
1. Estimated number of new households; December 1985	238	159	79
2. Estimated demolitions	0	0	0
3. Growth and replacement requirement	238	159	79
4. Vacancies available @ beginning of period	0	0	0
5. Estimated number of required vacancies @ 1% owner and 5% renter	37	14	23
6. Deficiency of vacant units	37	14	23
7. Estimated growth, replacement, and vacancy requirement	275	173	102
8. Annual housing requirements needed to meet projection	34	22	12

EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

The 1976 Special Census

A special census of the County of Sierra was conducted by the Department of Finance in July 1976, at the request of the Board of Supervisors. In the course of this census, all of the housing units in the County were enumerated, and judged to be vacant if they housed residents less than six (6) months of the year. The enumerator also asked how long residents had resided in their current house, whether they owned or rented, and what their annual income was for 1975. The compliation and analysis of the data produced in the special census have provided a substantial percentage of the detailed characteristics used in this report. The entire census results are published as an appendix to the Background Data Reports.

Distribution of Housing: Seventy-five percent (75%) of the 1828 housing units in the County are located in the urban community areas. The Alleghany-Pike-Forest area has 134 housing units; Goodyears Bar-Downieville-Sierra City (including Haskell Creek) contain 560; Calpine-Sattley-Sierraville have 262, the City of Loyalton and Sierra Brooks contain 375; and Verdi has 51. The 448 remaining housing units enumerated in the census were located in non-urban areas, 325 on the west side of Yuba Pass, and 123 on the east side.

Vacancy Factor: Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the housing units in the urban areas were classified as vacant by the census. These housing units were occupied less than six (6) months of year, but not necessarily available for rent or sale to persons seeking housing. In the Pike-Alleghany-Forest area, thirty-four percent (34%) of the housing units (45 units) were vacant; in the Downieville Goodyears Bar-Sierra City area, (including Haskell Creek), forty-three percent (43%), (240 units) were vacant; in the Sattley-Calpine-Sierraville area thirty-one percent (31%), (82 units), in the Loyalton-Sierra Brooks area, six percent (6%), (3 units) were vacant. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the housing units in non-urban areas on the western side of Yuba Pass were vacant, and on the eastern side, twenty-seven percent (27%) were vacant.

In cumulative totals, forty-seven percent (47%) of the housing units in the western portion of Sierra County were classified as vacant, while seventeen percent (17%) in the eastern portion were so classified.

The high vacancy factor, and particularly the distribution of vacant units throughout the County reflects the high percentage of recreational or second home housing units in the County.

Housing Types: There are 1828 housing units in Sierra County. 1532 of these (84%) are single family structures; 76 (4%) are multifamily units, 169 (9%) are mobile homes or trailers, and 50 (3%) are miscellaneous housing units. Group quarters housed some 41 persons, but these structures were not included in the count of housing units.

Population Density: Population density is a measure of the average number of persons per housing unit, which is determined by dividing the population by the number of non-vacant housing units. Housing units in the Pike-Alleghany-Forest area have an average of 2.4 persons per unit; in the Goodyears Bar-Downieville-Sierra City (including Haskell Creek) area, 2.4; in the Calpine-Sierraville-Sattley area, 2.6; in the Loyalton-Sierra Brooks area, 2.7; and in the Verdi area of 2.3. The non-urban portion of western Sierra County has a population density of 2.2, and the eastern portion averages 2.5 persons per household. The overall average for the State of California in 1970 was 2.9 persons per household, and racial minority households were significantly larger.

The population density of Sierra County indicates that either the general house size is actually lower than the Statewide average, or that there are a larger number of one and two person households, which bring down the overall percentage. Most likely it is a combination of each of these factors.

Tenure Characteristics: 1199 households were enumerated in the special census. 62% of all the housing units were owner-occupied, 33% were rented, and 5% of the households censused declined to indicate tenure. In the unincorporated areas of the County, 60% of the housing units were owner-occupied, 33% rented and 7% did not respond. In the City of Loyalton, 68% were owner-occupied, 31% rented, and 1% no response.

Owner/renter patterns are generally interpreted as a measure of residential stability as homeowners are generally characterized as being less mobile than renters.

A second characteristic which can be derived from the tenure ratio is that many of the rental units are single family homes because although 33% of the County's households are rented, only 19% of the County's occupied housing units were non-single family units. If the assumption were made that all occupied multi-family units, trailers and mobile homes and miscallaneous housing units were rental units, at least some 159 households must be renting single family homes, not including the 64 households which declined to state their tenure.

Rental Rates: 391 rental units were enumerated in the census. 79 units (20%) were occupied on a non-rent basis; 45 units (12%) have a gross rental rate less than $50 per month; 157 units, (40%) rent between $50 and $100; 74 units (19%) rent for $100 to $150; and 36 units (9%) rent for over $150 per month. Only 2% of the County's rental units command over $200 a month in gross rent.

Rental rates are generally used as key indicators in determining housing quality, and the economic affluence of an area. This census enumerated only gross rent, which may present a skewed picture because utilities in high elevation areas which are isolated from urban areas are very expensive. Winter heating, which may extend six or seven months out of the year, using propane, fuel oil, or electricity can double or triple the rental payment and must be considered as a part of the basic housing needs.

Household Mobility: The length of residence of a household in the same house is an indicator of community stability. The census revealed that, of the 1132 responding households, 569 (or 50%) have lived in the same residence for over 10 years, and 220 of those (19%) for over 30 years. Twenty-three households (2%) had occupied their residence less than 30 days, and 164 (14%) had been at their residence less than one year. 399 households (35%) occupied their current residences one to ten years.

These figures indicate a much higher degree of residential stability in Sierra County than in the State of California as a whole. On a Statewide basis in 1970, only 9.6% of all rural households had lived in the same house over 20 years, and only 7.3% of rural and urban households could claim the same. Nearly 29% of the households across the State had moved into their place of residence within one year of the State census, as compared to 14% in Sierra County.

The City of Loyalton displays even greater patterns of stability; over 70% of households have resided in the same house for over ten years.

Residential stability is generally seen as a desirable feature, because people who remain in the same community for a long time are more likely to be concerned about its improvement and well being than those which are highly transient. An overly stable residential population, however, may reflect an out migration of young persons from the area, and the lack of new households either being formed in the area or migrating in.

The 1970 Federal Census

Many questions were asked on the 1970 Federal Census which were not asked by the enumerators in the 1976 special census. The housing and population related characteristics compiled from the 1970 census reveal the following information:

- 63% of all households had only one or two persons
- 12% of all households had five or more persons
- 7% of all residential structures were valued at less than $5,000; 79% were valued between $5,000 and $20,000, and only 14% were valued at over $20,000. (All figures are 1970 values.)
- 62% of the County's housing units were over 30 years old, 22% were between 10 and 30 years old, and 16% were less than 10 years old.
- 128 families, 58% of all renter-households, reported paying over 20% of their gross income for rent.

Distribution of New Housing

A count of new housing units started in the past five years was made from records kept by the State and County Building Departments, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. New Housing Starts in Sierra County
January 1970 - December 1975

Area	Single Family	Mobile Home	Other*	Total
Pike	5	11	1	17
Goodyears Bar	2	--	1	3
Downieville	4	--	-	4
Sierra City	30	5	5	40
Sattley	1	2	-	3
Calpine	7	4	1	12
Sierraville	4	2	-	6
Loyalton	38	9	1	48
Verdi	22	1	-	23
Other Areas	18	3	5	26
Total	131	37	14	182

SOURCE: State of California Building Department Records
Sierra County Building Department Records

* "Other" includes cabins, apartments, duplexes, etc.

IDENTIFICATION OF HOUSING PROBLEMS

Housing problems can arise in either the supply or condition of housing, or the demand for housing. Each of these problems will be discussed generally, and then the community areas will be individually analyzed.

Housing Supply Problems

There is a shortage in housing units available for sale or for rent in all of the County's communities. The shortage pervades the entire price and age spectrum, ranging from new houses, multi-family units, rental units and older homes.

New Housing: There are few undeveloped natural building sites left in some community areas. Environmental constraints, including lack of a dependable domestic water source or the inability of the land to dispose of sewage prohibits building in some areas. Some communities are perched on mountain hillsides tucked in small river canyons which offer little buildable space that is not too steep or too close to a river.

Ownership patterns whereby the Federal and State government own nearly all the desirable land around several existing communities makes these areas unavailable for the construction of new homes. In other instances, individuals or commercial interest with large holdings are not willing to sell or develop their lands, which limits new development opportunity.

County zoning is another factor limiting new building in some communities. All of the communities area surrounded by General Forest (GF) or Agriculture (A1) zoning districts which were designed to discourage residential development and require very large lots. Community expansion districts, which permit 10-acre lots also surround each community, but frequently include lands which are undesirable for development or are publicly owned. Ten-acre lots are excessively large for single family homes, and a rezoning is generally necessary before these areas can be developed.

A final factor affecting the supply of new housing in Sierra County is the high cost of building materials. Building materials are more expensive, generally because of the transportation cost involved, but the market is not strong enough to allow a prudent investor to recoup profits necessary to make it economically profitable to construct expensive residential buildings in Sierra County.

Existing Housing: Problems in supply of existing housing includes the large percentage of the housing stock which is held by out-of-town owners for vacation and weekend use. Persons from urban areas can frequently afford to pay more money for a recreational home than local residents can for permanent housing. This is a problem which is increasing with time, because as homes used for year-round residences become available for sale, they are taken out of the permanent housing stock for second home use.

A second problem with the existing housing supply is related to ownership patterns. There are many isolated residences in the County which are located on Federal property, generally on mining claims. Some of these residences are used as year-round homes while others are only seasonally occupied.

Forest Service policy permits residential occupancy only on designated summer recreation tracts for specified seasonal recreation purposes. These uses are expected to continue in the forseeable future. As certain "isolated" residential permits expire, occupancy of those residences may be terminated where such use conflicts with National Forest Land Management and Public Use. Residential use on unpatented mining claims must be directly related to, and necessary for, mineral development and production. Owners of such improvements can acquire private land and relocate their improvements thereon. This forces persons who had been living in these structures to compete for the other limited available houses if they are to remain in the area. Alternatively, it forces them to leave the area.

Housing Condition Problems

Housing condition is generally a result of three factors: Quality of original construction, maintenance, and age of the structure. The 1970 Census of Housing and Population did not census housing condition, but the following condition indicators were reported:

- 61% of all occupied housing was built prior to 1939. Many of the structures may be substandard by current standards due to more lenient building codes in times past, and the construction of of many non-code buildings without a permit. (For example, many structures lack foundations, are uninsulated, single wall construction, contain inadequate wiring or plumbing, and similar conditions).

- As Table 2 indicates, in 1970, 337 households (39% of all households censused) had a gross income of less than $5,000. The greatest percentage of these households were husband/wife households over age 65, and primary individuals. Elderly persons and individuals may be less capable of accomplishing necessary household maintenance tasks than younger persons and families, and limited incomes would not permit hiring persons to perform the work.

- Table 3 shows that most of the families with annual incomes under $5,000 are one and two person families. Household income must be divided among all the families needs, and in general, the larger low income families will require larger homes and have proportionally less to spend on housing maintenance and upkeep.

Housing Demand Problems

Demand for housing throughout Sierra County is strong enough to maintain a perpetually "tight" housing market.

Table 2. Household Tenure by Family Type and Age by Income

Household Income	Type of Family						
	Husband-Wife Family				Other Family	Primary Individual	TOT
	Under 30	30-44	45-64	Over 65			
$2000	0	0	17	14	18	125	17
own	0	0	5	14	8	82	10
rent	0	0	12	0	10	43	6
$2-2999	5	0	9	23	0	30	6
own	0	0	9	18	0	10	3
rent	5	0	0	5	0	20	3
$3-4999	0	18	29	29	0	20	9
own	0	18	19	24	0	0	6
rent	0	0	10	5	0	0	3
$5-6999	10	26	36	31	7	20	13
own	0	14	23	19	7	13	7
rent	10	12	13	12	0	7	5
$7-14999	22	64	127	32	19	24	28
own	0	36	97	26	14	6	17
rent	22	28	30	6	5	18	10
$15-24999	9	17	50	11	0	4	9
own	0	17	44	11	0	4	7
rent	9	0	6	0	0	0	1
$25000+	0	7	10	5	0	6	2
own	0	7	5	5	0	6	2
rent	0	0	5	0	0	0	
TOTAL	46	132	278	145	44	229	87

SOURCE: 1970 Census of Population and Housing. Fourth Count.

Table 3. Household Size by Annual Income

Household Income	Family Size 1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6+ Persons	TOTAL
$2000	125	39	0	0	10	0	174
$2-2999	26	36	0	5	0	0	67
$3-4999	15	58	6	10	7	0	96
$5-6999	20	30	28	23	14	15	130
$7-9999	19	63	20	25	0	10	137
$10-14999	0	76	13	37	15	10	151
$15-24999	0	28	27	17	7	12	91
$25000+	6	10	0	5	7	0	28
TOTAL	211	340	94	122	60	47	874

SOURCE: 1970 Census of Population and Housing. Fourth Count.

The demand by persons and families for year-round residences is strong, but as seen in Tables 1 and 2, many have a limited dollar demand capability. A substantial portion of the low income persons are retired, however, and may be living on investments or past savings rather than their income.

Recreational demand for second homes is a major factor in many parts of the county. It is not significantly larger due to the lack of available homes and homesites, and the relatively poor access from the major urban areas when compared to the Tahoe area second home market.

Approximately 22% of all the employed heads of household work for some governmental entity. The excess demand for permanent housing is generated partially by persons who must live in the area. The governmental entities, particularly the United States Forest Service and California Department of Highways could alleviate this problem by providing housing for some of their employees, however, it is not intended to imply competition with private development opportunities.

Another housing demand problem lies in the seasonality of the demand patterns. It is possible to rent almost any habitable structure along the summer months, but many units are vacant during the winter This reduces the incentive of builders to construct new units, particularly rental units. This also forces many renters into relocating when housing they have been occupying during the winter is once again in demand.

A final housing demand problem is the lack of available financing for construction in Sierra County. There is only one bank in the County, and lending institutions outside the County are hesitant to make loans outside their "lending area." Loans are difficult to obtain for the purchase of existing housing, partially because most of the existing housing does not meet bank housing codes. This generally results in owner financing for existing housing sales, or occassionally in sales to persons who can afford to pay cash. In terms of new homes, modular homes or mobilehomes, which can be financed through a dealer, become more a possibility for the average owner than a traditional frame home.

Housing Problems by Area

Pike: This is an old town which was largely destroyed by fire and is now experiencing a new wave of population growth. Major housing problems include:

- Lack of a reliable domestic water source. (All residences depend on wells or springs.)
- Zoning constraint of 10-acre minimum lot size limiting available land.
- Fire protection is currently indadequate, but plans have been developed for a firehouse in the community. Funds for construction have not yet been secured.

- Most structures and mobilehomes in the community are relatively new and up to code. Deterioration is not a significant problem in Pike.

Alleghany-Forest: These communities are remnants of the gold mining prosperity, composed mainly of deteriorated wooden houses. Major housing problems include:

- "Clouded Title" deeds. This occurs because there are antiquity mining claim rights to the land upon which many of the houses sit.

- Deterioration of structures due to age, inadequate original construction and lack of maintenance. Many homes lack foundations, and have extremely substandard wiring and heating capacity.

- Absentee ownership is high, and permits maintenance to go undone. Renter tenancy is high.

- Maintenance incentrive is reduced by low sales value for houses with clouded titles, and upon which insurance companies cannot guarantee title.

- Domestic water supply is inadequate, and emergency water supply is severely deficient. Plans for improvement of both systems have been developed, but implementation is contingent upon grant funding and townsite creation.

  National Forest lands within the Alleghany townsite have been patented under Bureau of Land Management Townsite Act authority; responsibility for allocation of such lands is the responsibility of the townspeople and the Judge of the Superior Court.

- Available land for new housing is limited by steep slope constraints.

- Residents are predominately low income or retired persons, and there is a need for additional low rent housing or mobile-home spaces. Lack of bank financing (due to bank hesitation to make loans on clouded title property) makes new development on a significant level unlikely.

- Many homes have failing sewage systems. The County Sanitarian has initiated legal proceedings to force correction of this problem.

- Mining is experiencing a new wave of activity, which may draw new residents to the area and exacerbate a critically short housing supply problem.

  Forest City is located entirely on National Forest System Lands. Structures remaining in the community are owned by a few individuals. Some of the houses are rented. Most of the area is encumbered by unpatented mining claims owned by a claimant other than the surface occupants. The community has been nominated to the National Register of Historical Places.

Goodyears Bar: The Goodyears Bar community area is divided by the North Yuba River and Highway 49 into the Goodyears Bar area and the Goodyears Creek Road area. Major housing problems include:

- Many housing units are located on National Forest land, including about a dozen year-round residences. Owners of these houses live with the knowledge that they will be required to remove their homes from Federal property when their leases expire, unless they can affect a land trade with the United States Forest Service.

- Several homes in the Goodyears Bar area are in a flood prone area. Flood waters may damage the homes and property, and flood insurance is not available.

- There is a very limited amount of private vacant land which is not environmentally constrained (and therefore deemed unbuildable) by being too steep, inaccessible, lacking water, or in a flood prone area.

- One family's ownership controls nearly all the vacant and subdividable land in the Goodyears Bar area. The United States Forest Service controls much of the remaining land in the area.

- Many homes are severly deteriorated. Many were constructed as summer homes or mining cabins and are now being used as year-round residences. Such homes generally provide substandard winter shelter.

- There is strong demand for primary housing in Goodyears Bar due to its proximity to employment in Downieville and for retirement homes. Second home demand competes with primary residence demand, and the demand far outpaces the supply.

- Fire protection in Goodyears Bar is wholly inadequate to protect residences. No fire protection agency with residential fire protection responsibility exists in this community.

Downieville: The historical County seat sits astride the intersection of two rivers, flanked by steep mountains. Major housing problems include:

- A substantial portion of the town is in a flood prone area.

- Government employment has been expanding, but no new housing has been provided. (This is a particularly critical factor in the summer months when additional temporary employees are hired by the United States Forest Service.)

- Most of the vacant land is environmentally constrained by escessively steep slopes, closeness to the river, or susceptibility of septic tank failure.

- There is a demand for apartments, which cannot be provided because of the inability of the land to accept the projected sewage, and the limited number of vacant building sites.

- The private land in the townsite is surrounded by National Forest lands which are not available for development.

- The town has a public water supply system which cannot accommodate any substantial amount of new growth.

- The demand for primary housing is high as is the demand for second homes. Many second houses are vacant for most of the year, with their owners being unwilling to rent them.

- A few landowners hold most of the vacant buildable lots in the town, and are unwilling to sell or develop them.

- The private land outside the townsite is zoned General Forest (GF), which permits only home home per 640 acres.

- Many existing homes are located in an identified flood prone area.

- Some homes provide substandard winter shelter, resulting in residents spending substantial sums for winter heating.

- Nearly 30% of residents principal source of income is from Social Security or other retirement benefits. The rapidly increasing assessed value of homes owned by these people is requiring a larger pecentage of their limited incomes for taxes.

Sierra City: This is a high elevation town comprised principally of resort related workers, government workers, retired persons and vacation homes. Major housing problems include:

- Over half the town's houses are vacation homes, which are held vacant most of the year.

- The town is overshadowed by Sierra Buttes, steep slopes prone to avalanche. It is not appropriate to place residents in these areas.

- The town water is supplied by several private systems, some of which have deficiencies in both quality and quantity. Other homes have excellent supplies, and creation of a public water utility in the near future is unlikely.

- Unlike other nearby towns, Sierra City does have land available for residential expansion, and is absorbing a significant amount of the overflow demand from Downieville.

- There are few dilapidated homes in Sierra City.

Calpine: Originally a lumber camp housing community, Calpine sits in a meadow surrounded by the hills of the Sierra Valley. Major housing problems include:

- Dilapidation and inadequate original construction are prevalent among Calpine's older housing units. Structural deficiencies, including lack of foundations are common.

- Some houses are excessively small and narrow, with inadequate wiring and plumbing.

- The central portion of the town has been subdivided into very small lots which, if fully developed, will most likely result in several sewage problems and a shortage of water provided by the Calpine Waterworks.

- There is a demand for large lots homesites, the provision of which may require the loss of agricultural or timber producing lands.

Sattley: This is the smallest community in the County. Major hou ousing problems include:

- There is a lack of vacant lots in the Sattley area, but there is also a lack of employment and new growth can be directed to Calpine, only five miles away.

- Much of the land between Sattley and Calpine has been zoned for ten acre lots for several years, but no new parcels have been created, indicating that the demand is limited, or that owners have no desire to subdivide. Due to the small size of the town, no other housing problems seem critical.

Sierraville: This town is basically a residential crossroads community in the center of the Sierra Valley. Major housing problems include:

- A critical shortage of available houses, and vacant buildable lots to accommodate new home construction in the Sierraville area.

- A high water table making septic tank failure a likelihood in most areas.

- The town is surrounded by agricultural land, most of which is constrained by Land Conservation Contracts which preclude subdivision for residential development.

- Some of the homes in Sierraville are deteriorated and others are in need of minor maintenance work. The majority of Sierraville's housing units are wood frame, single family units occupied by year-round residents.

- There is an identified need for additional low cost housing, or mobilehome accommodations for families employed in the area.

- The area identified by the existing zoning plan for community expansion bears no relation to that which is actually suited for development. Many areas indicated are wet meadows, inaccessible or superior agricultural lands.

Verdi: This town is divided by the State line with most of the houses and all of the commercial establishments being located in Nevada. Major housing problems include:

- The town is a "two part" residential suburb of both Verdi, Nevada and Reno, Nevada. Growth and development patterns in those communities dictate the housing demand in Verdi, California.

- In the older areas, some deterioration of homes can be found.

- There is no public water system, and many existing wells are experiencing critical deficiencies. As new areas develop, this shortness of water can be expected to become more critical.

- The community services do not exist to accommodate residential development, such as school and fire protection facilities. Currently, these services are provided by Verdi, Nevada.

- There is a demand for new housing and vacant lots, but access and zoning are major prohibiting factors. Currently, most of the vacant, unsubdivided land is zoned General Forest, Community Expansion, which requires a 10 acre minimum lot aize. The prevalent demand is for one to five acre lots.

- Housing increases are afforded at a direct expense of deer habitat and migration routes. Many residents express the concern that herds will be severely diminished if the area is allowed to grow.

Housing Prospects

The Housing Element of the General Plan should not only identify housing problems, but also indicate what steps can be taken, at a local government level, to resolve the housing problems. The following five major housing problems were identified throughout the County:

- Lack of vacant land for new residential building.

- Deterioration of existing units.

- Financial markets which are hesitant to loan money for any housing related purpose in Sierra County.

- Local income levels are low, which means residents cannot afford to pay high rental rates, or purchase high cost homes.

- Substantial competition for both homes and homesites between persons needing primary housing and persons desiring second homes.

Table 1C.

Housing Conditions for Sierra County by Percent for Units Surveyed

	Sierra County	East Sierra Div.	ED 1 Loyalton	ED 2	West Sierra Div.	ED 3	ED 4
Total Housing Units	1,551	856	353	503	695	--	--
Units Surveyed	327	129	82	47	199	69	130
Percent Surveyed	21	15	23	9	29	--	--
Unit Type:							
Percent Single Family	89	92	94	89	87	96	83
Percent Multi-Family	5	3	2	2	8	3	10
Percent Mobilehome	5	5	4	9	4	--	6
Percent Summer Cabin	1	--	--	--	1	1	1
Age of Structure:							
Percent 0 - 10 years	18	18	9	22	19	19	19
Percent 11 - 20 years	10	10	6	12	12	17	9
Percent Over 20 years	72	72	85	66	69	64	72
Structure Rating:							
Percent Sound	90	88	87	88	94	92	95
Percent Unsound	10	12	13	12	6	8	5
Overall Rating:							
Percent Good	75	73	52	84	78	68	83
Percent Fair	19	21	33	15	15	21	12
Percent Poor	6	6	15	1	7	11	5
Percent Occupied	91	96	98	94	88	78	93
Percent Vacant Units	9	4	2	6	12	22	7

Table

Housing Conditions for Sierra County by Percent for Units Surveyed

	Sierra County	East Sierra Div.	ED 1 Loyalton	ED 2	West Sierra Div.	ED 3	ED 4
Units with Foundation or Slab							
Percent of Units	46%	62	79	32	35	32	37
Walls:							
Condition: Percent Good	75	73	79	62	76	65	82
Percent Fair	18	20	16	28	18	25	16
Percent Poor	7	7	5	10	6	15	2
Major Materials*	Wood	Wood	Wood	Wood	Wood	Wood	Wood
Percent	78	80	80	78	81	91	75
Windows:							
Condition: Percent Good	78	72	78	62	81	80	82
Percent Fair	18	23	17	34	15	15	15
Percent Poor	4	5	5	4	4	5	3
Roof:							
Condition: Percent Good	80	75	71	83	82	75	87
Percent Fair	17	20	23	13	16	25	11
Percent Poor	3	5	6	4	2	3	2
Major Materials*	Metal	Wood	Wood	Metal	Metal	Metal	Metal
Percent	56	38	44	53	77	72	80
Average Room/Single Family Unit							
Average Total Rooms	5.9	5.7	5.8	5.5	5.9	6.0	5.8
Average Number Bedrooms	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.5	2.8	3.0	2.7

* W - Wood, AS - Asphalt, M - Metal, RF - rolled felt

Table 3C

Housing Conditions for Sierra County by Percent for Units Surveyed

	Sierra County	East Sierra Div.	ED 1 Loyalton	ED 2	West Sierra Div.	ED 3	ED 4
Electricity:							
Percent - Yes	92	98	99	98	87	64	100
Percent - No	1	2	1	2	2	4	--
Percent - No Reply	7	--	--	--	11	32	--
Gas:							
Percent Natural	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Percent LPG	75	88	93	96	63	62	64
Percent Other	25	12	7	4	37	38	36
Water:							
Percent Private	11	20	--	55	5	15	--
Percent Public	89	80	100	45	95	85	100
Paved Streets:							
Percent - Yes	96	92	94	89	99	100	98
Percent - No	4	8	6	11	1	--	2
Adequate Drainage:							
Percent - Yes	97	95	99	87	99	100	98
Percent - No	3	5	1	13	1	--	2
Surrounding Area Condition:							
Percent - Good	71	65	62	70	75	55	86
Percent - Fair	22	33	34	30	15	26	8
Percent - Poor	7	2	4	--	10	19	6
Access and Parking:							
Percent - Yes	98	98	99	98	99	100	98
Percent - No	2	2	1	2	1	--	2

GOAL, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES

GOAL

The Housing Element presents programs and policies for encouraging sound housing development throughout Sierra County and identifies priority housing needs. The goal of the Housing Element reflects a concensus of opinion among citizen groups and local governmental officials and is represented as follows:

> "To provide each existing and prospective Sierra County resident with the ability to purchase or rent housing as consistent as possible with present lifestyles and that such be provided in communities which are accessible to employment opportunity, public facilities, and services and which retain the rural character of the County."

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Housing Element stress to stimulate communication, cooperation, and coordination among all interests and are in support of the following three (3) policy objectives of the State of California, Department of Housing and Community Development:

1) To promote and ensure the provision of adequate housing for all persons regardless of income, age, race, sex, marital status, ethnic background, or other arbitrary factors.

2) To promote and ensure the provision of housing selection by location, type, price, and tenure.

3) To promote and ensure the development of a balanced residential environment with access to employment opportunities, community facilities, and adequate services.

The following objectives represent specific desires of the County in satisfying the goal of the Housing Element:

1) To provide rental housing to meet the need of renters in various income groups and at various age levels, and to stabilize and protect the residential characteristics of the County.

2) To provide for and encourage low density intermediate lot sizes for single family homes in a semi-rural setting in an orderly fashion around existing communities within the County at or near population centers.

3) To provide for and encourage low intensity, large lot developments for single family homes in an orderly fashion in the applicable open areas of the County which are particularly suited to such uses - It is intended that this zone be applicable in the "A1" Agricultural and "GF" General Forest Districts within the County. This district recognizes the need to protect and enhance our natural forests and agricultural lands.

4) To prevent the overcrowding of land, to avoid undue concentration of population, and to maintain a suitable balance between structures and open spaces.

5) To stabilize and protect the residential characteristics of the zone and to promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life.

6) To stabilize and protect the residential characteristics where a compatible mingling of single family dwellings and two family dwellings is likely to occur and to promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life.

7) To encourage the rehabilitation or preservation of existing housing.

POLICIES

The following policies provide a variety of specific methods for achieving the identified objectives and provide direction in the selection of expanding present programs and providing new programs.

Objective 1

To provide rental housing to meet the need of renters in various income groups and at various age levels, and to stabilize and protect the residential characteristics of the area.

Policies:

1) Increase the permissible densities within townsite areas to allow for duplexes by careful design and multi-family residences, if sewage disposal or other constraints are mitigable.

2) Encourage clustering of new dwelling units in planned developments.

3) Encourage the United States Forest Service to relinquish developable land surrounding or within existing townsites.

4) Define feasible community expansion areas surrounding existing townsites, and zone those areas for urban residential uses.

5) Encourage a savings and loan association or bank to establish at least a part-time office in the County.

6) Encourage graduated mortgage payment.

7) Encourage private developers to use United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mortgage financing programs.

8) Encourage private developers to use the Housing Assistance Council's revolving loan fund.

9) Encourage private individuals to use Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA) rural loan and grant programs for rehabilitation and home ownership.

10) Expedite the review and approval process for variances and building plans.

11) Permit and encourage the use of various modular or factory-built housing components.

12) Permit and encourage the placement of modular or factory-built homes in the County, with a special use permit.

13) Permit and encourage "shell houses" that can be added to or improved by the user over an extended period of time.

14) Allow the placement of mobile homes as a single family use with a special use permit in all zones where single family homes are permitted, if they can be protected and screened so as not to disrupt neighborhood aesthetics.

Objective 2

To provide for and encourage low density intermediate lot size for single family homes in a semi-rural setting in an orderly fashion around existing communities within the County - It is intended that this zone be applicable to those areas zoned "CE" Community Expansion Districts at or near population centers.

Policy:

1) Apply current zoning ordinance.

Objective 3

To provide for and encourage low intensity large lot developments for single family homes in an orderly fashion in the applicable open areas of the County which are particularly suited to such uses - It is intended that this zone be applicable in the "A1" Agricultural and "GF" General Forest Districts within the County. This district recognizes the need to protect and enhance our natural forests and agricultural lands.

Objective 4

To prevent the overcrowding of land, to avoid undue concentration of population, and to maintain a suitable balance between the structures and open spaces.

Policies:

1) Periodically review and update the County's General Plan, zoning ordinance and other development regulations to address current development issues.

2) Discourage subdivisions of timber and agricultural zoned lands.

Objectives 5 & 6

To stabilize and protect the residential characteristics of all residential zones and to promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life; and

To stabilize and protect the residential characteristics where a compatible mingling of single family dwellings and two family dwellings is likely to occur and to promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life.

Policies:

1) Standards for residential development should be appropriate for the scale and density of that development, and the natural carrying capacities of the site.

2) The land use controls adopted should reflect the best emerging techniques from rural and surburban development experience including planned unit development and site plan review procedures, environmental and fiscal impact analysis, and environmental performance controls.

3) Sensitive environmental areas such as hillsides, wetlands, and shorelines should be governed by regulations designed to minimize environmental impacts during and after construction. These regulations should prescribe performance standards and preventive techniques governing such things as erosion and runoff control, removal of vegetation, density reductions on excessive slopes, and buffer zones and setback requirements for lakes, streams, and other water bodies.

4) Cluster techniques should be encouraged or required in sensitive environmental areas permitting substantial portions of development sites to be left in undisturbed, natural open space.

5) Development proposals should be carefully reviewed to ensure that projects do not block or inhibit access to public recreational areas and public lands.

6) Septic tanks should not be considered acceptable as a permanent means of sewage disposal in high density subdivisions. Where central sewer systems are not feasible, density limits should be set low enough to guarantee that septic tanks pose no threat to ground or surface water quality. (Actual density standards will vary from place to place depending on soil suitability, ground water conditions, etc.)

7) Where septic tanks are permitted, evidence of adequate site capability (lot size/soil conditions) should be provided on a lot-by-lot basis to prevent the platting of any unbuildable lots.

8) Separation requirements between private wells and septic tanks should not be compromised.

9) No subdivision should be approved, building permit issued, or lot sold until existence of a water supply adequate to support full buildout and permanent occupancy has been certified. The adequacy of proposed sewage disposal methods should also be certified before any subdivision plat is approved.

10) Wherever possible, the County should guide the location of development into areas where they have the existing or planned capacity to provide the necessary public services.

11) Project facilities (e.g., water supply and sewage disposal systems) should be designed to accommodate peak loads at full occupancy. Even though most second homes are only occupied on a seasonal basis, projects can be fully occupied during peak recreational seasons, and facilities must have the capacity to service them during these periods of peak demand.

12) Variances, if granted, from conventional design standards (for such improvements as roads and drainage systems) should be based solely on sound engineering design and environmental performance criteria depending on the density and scale of the project and the natural characteristics of the site. Development standards should not be reduced on the grounds that project facilities will be privately owned and maintained by the developer or a property owners association.

13) Variances from other conventional subdivision improvement requirements (e.g., street lighting, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters) may be appropriate at low densities to reduce development costs and maintain rural character. Decisions of such variances, however, should also be based on performance criteria and the needs of project residents, and may be equally appropriate for first home developments under similar conditions.

14) Governments should take steps in vacant or partially developed subdivisions to control erosion and runoff from substandard road beds and cleared construction sites.

Objective 7

Encourage the rehabilitation of existing houses.

Policies:

1) Encourage private individuals to use Farmer's Home Administratin (FmHA), Housing and Urban Development Federal Housing Administration (HUD/FHA), and State Housing and Community Development (HCD) loan and grant programs for housing rehabilitation.

2) In advanced cases of disrepair, initiate a code enforcement program to ensure that houses are not a safety hazard to residents. Such a code enforcement program should be coordinated with Federal and State programs.

3) Enlist the cooperation of the high school in establishing a program whereby students gain practical experience in construction techniques by repairing elderly persons homes.

4) Enlist the cooperation of retired building tradesmen in establishing a home repair program.

5) Encourage public investment in community improvement projects, such as water systems, parks, etc., which will increase the value of units and provide incentives for improvement.

Objective 8

Eliminate the effects of discrimination in housing.

Policies:

Make local officials aware of the forms of discrimination in the provision of housing and implement fair and affirmative action practices to serve as examples for private developers, renters, and such.

PRIORITIES AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

PRIORITIES

The following priorities are established in achieving the Housing Element goal when developing a housing program or securing housing assistance:

1) Maintenance of the rural character of Sierra County.

2) Maintenance of a stable housing market.

3) Encouragement of maintenance and rehabilitation programs to protect and preserve existing housing stock.

4) Provision of sound, new housing developments.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Housing programs are identified to meet the housing needs in Sierra County. Each program will include: (1) responsibility for implementation; (2) timing; (3) potential funding sources (if applicable). The identified housing needs form the basis for specific program development by Sierra County.

CURRENT STATUS OF PROGRAM

Currently, Sierra County has approved two housing programs to meet the needs of the residents: (1) Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments Program; and (2) FHA Low Income - Senior Citizens Housing Project. The Section 8 Housing Program is in progress while the Senior Citizens Housing project is currently under construction.

PROGRAM

Specific Objective 1:

Increase the "effective" amount of buildable land in the County.

- Action 1: Rezone to higher densities those lands in and around each community which are not constrained by natural or man-made features.

  Responsible Parties: Planning Commission and Planning Department.

  Financing: Planning Department Budget.

  Time for Completion: Three (3) years.

  Evaluation Criteria: Are densities increasing in townsite areas?

- Action 2: Initiate discussions with the United States Forest Service about relinquishing developable land around townsites.

  Responsible Parties: Planning Commission and Planning Department.

  Financing: Planning Department Budget.

  Time for Completion: Two (2) years.

  Evaluation Criteria: Were talks held?

- Action 3: Apply for all appropriate water, sewer and fire protection systems development grants.

  Responsible Parties: Board of Supervisors, Overall Economic Development Program Committee, County Departments, Public and Non-Profit Organizations.

  Financing: Varies

  Time for Completion: Continuously

  Evaluation Criteria: Does the Overall Economic Development Program Committee have appropriate projects to review and evaluate each year?

Specific Objective 2:

Inform private individuals and developers about available housing loan and grant programs.

- Action 1: Post current information about relevant FmHA and HUD programs on bulletin boards in the County Courthouse and in the Loyalton City Hall.

  Responsible Parties: Planning Department.

  Financing: Planning Department Budget.

  Time for Completion: Four (4) months.

  Evaluation Criteria: Are individuals or developers asking questions about relevant programs?

Specific Objective 3:

Increase the amount of money available in the County for home construction and financing.

- Action 1: Initiate discussions with various banking institutions about the possibility of investing more heavily in Sierra County.

Responsible Parties: Board of Supervisors or Chamber of Commerce.

Financing: Board of Supervisors or Chamber of Commerce Budget.

Time for Completion: Two (2) years.

Evaluation Criteria: Is more money available?

Specific Objective 4:

Increase the rent-paying ability of local tenants.

- Action 1: Invite the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to sponsor a "Section 8" rental assistance program in the County.

  Responsible Parties: Planning Department and Welfare Department.

  Financing: N/A

  Time for Completion: Six (6) months.

  Evaluation Criteria: Was HCD contacted?

Specific Objective 5:

Increase the amount of money available to County residents for home repair.

- Action 1: Establish local non-profit corporations to act as applicants for and recipients of available rehabilitation loan funds.

  Responsible Parties: Local community groups with assistance from the Sierra Planning Organization/ Sierra Economic Development District.

  Financing: N/A

  Time for Completion: Five (5) years.

  Evaluation Criteria: Are there any new non-profit corporations in the County?

Specific Objective 6:

Initiate a local home repair program.

- Action 1: Contact the high schools and retired tradesmen about starting a home repair work/study program.

Responsible Parties: Building Inspector or Department of Public Works.

Financing: Public Works Budget.

Time for Completion: One (1) year.

Evaluation Criteria: Were the schools and retired tradesmen contacted?

Specific Objective 7:

Initiate a program for identifying homes needing repair.

- Action 1: Establish a routine for inspecting and citing dwellings which do not comply with the County building code.

  Responsible Parties: Building Inspector.

  Financing: Public Works Budget.

  Time for Completion: Two (2) years.

  Evaluation Criteria: Have any buildings been repaired because of this action?

Specific Objective 8:

- Action 1: Develop and incorporate into the zoning ordinance performance standards for location and construction of new residential development.

  Responsible Parties: Planning Department.

  Financing: Planning Department Budget.

  Time for Completion: Two (2) years.

  Evaluation Criteria: Does the zoning ordinance specify measurable limits for erosion, sewage disposal, removal of vegetation, noise, etc.?

Specific Objective 9:

Promote the construction of housing for seasonal employees:

- Action 1: Adopt a resolution requesting that public agencies such as CALTRANS and the United States Forest Service, and private agencies such as Sierra Pacific Power Co. provide housing for their seasonal employees.

Responsible Parties: Board of Supervisors.

Financing: N/A

Time for Completion: One (1) year.

Evaluation Criteria: Was a resolution adopted?

PROGRAM OBSTACLES AND CONSTRAINTS

In achieving the County Housing goal, it is wise to use policy statements as a guide, however, it is also necessary to take action to eliminate barriers to the attainment of that goal.

Specific objectives and a plan of action have been proposed as a housing program, however, several obstacles and constraints have been identified. It is the desire of the County to eliminate these through implementation of the housing program. These obstacles and constraints are as follows:

1) Shortage of homes for rent or purchase.

2) Inadequate supply of serviced vacant land available for new residential development.

3) Deterioration of many existing units.

4) Insufficient amount of locally available private financing for new construction and rehabilitation.

5) Relatively low median income of year round residents.

6) Substantial competition between local residents needing primary housing and outsiders seeking second homes.

7) Significant absentee ownership resulting in a general lack of home maintenance in some areas.

8) Seasonal housing demand.

9) Unusually high home heating costs.

10) "Clouding" of some property titles.

UPDATING PROCESS

Periodic updating of the Housing Element should occur at five (5) year intervals or less. The updating process should be comprehensive and should include the following:

1) Evaluation of the effectiveness of the adopted housing program in accomplishing objectives and policies established in the element.

2) Continued evaluation of housing problems and needs.

) Continued incorporation of new census data as it is made available.

4) Continued involvement and awareness of State and Federal housing programs.

V. HOUSING

A. State and Federal Requirements

In 1967 the California Legislature enacted a law which now adds, as a mandatory part of the general plan, a housing element. In addition to the land use and circulation elements, Section 65302 of the Government Code also requires by July 1, 1969, "a housing element consisting of standards and plans for the improvement of housing and for provision of adequate sites for housing. This element of the plan shall endeavor to make adequate provision for the housing needs of all economic segments of the community."

In 1968 the 90th Congress enacted Public Law 90-448, the "Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968". This new law amended, among other sections, Section 701 of the housing Act of 1954 which now requires a housing element, ... "Planning carried out with assistance under this section shall also include a housing element as part of the preparation of comprehensive land use plans, and this consideration of the housing needs and land use requirements for housing in each comprehensive plan shall take into account all available evidence of the assumptions and statistical bases upon which the projection of zoning, community facilities, and population growth is based, so that the housing needs of both the region and the local communities studied in the planning will be adequately covered in terms of existing and prospective in-migrant population growth."

Subsequent to these legislative actions the appropriate state and federal agencies drafted policy statements and guidelines governing the preparation of a housing element and its content.

B. AIP Policy Statement

In addition, the Executive Board of the California Chapter of the American Institute of Planners adopted a policy statement or position paper on the housing element of the general plan.

On October 5, 1968, the Executive Board of the California Chapter of AIP recommended to the state and federal agencies a two-stage approach to the

public and private sectors should be defined.

5. A legislative commitment to a detailed, specific program of action to meet the established targets.

This AIP stage 1 - stage 2 program will allow the opportunity to take advantage of new information to be generated by the 1970 census. The additional time allowed by this approach will also permit effective citizen involvement in planning for housing, and will allow the time necessary for a coordinated market area-wide solution to housing problems. These suggested guidelines should allow sufficient flexibility to permit widely varying approaches to the housing problems of different communities. In addition, this framework itself should be considered relatively flexible, and should permit modification to fit into each community's planning process.

C. State Policy

The state has indicated, through its Department of Housing and Community Development, that the two major goals of the housing element as viewed by it are:

An honest appraisal of community housing needs

A commitment, through the establishment of realistic goals, to provide adequate housing to meet the needs of the community

In November, 1968 the State of California issued a policy regarding the housing element requirement as follows:

Effective July 1, 1969, no local general plan will be considered to be in conformance with state law unless it contains a housing element.

1. An identification of housing problems and a preliminary statement of community housing goals.
2. An indication of probable solutions to the identified problems.
3. A detailed work program for preparation of a complete housing plan for all economic segments of the community, in accordance with the desires and needs of the community.
4. Evidence of coordination with established regional agencies, housing authorities, citizen groups, and producers.

As stated further in the policy statement, the state intentionally adopted a broad policy; and that guidelines must be flexible and broad because California communities have widely varying problems, requirements, and characteristics.

D. Federal Policy

In December, 1968, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued its requirements and guidelines on the preparation and content of a housing element. In typical form HUD developed a multi-page description of requirements and guidelines which follow.

1. Preparation of a Housing Element (HUD Requirement)

   a. All applicants for Comprehensive Planning Assistance must prepare a housing element as a part of their continuing planning program. As a first step, all applicants must have completed an initial housing element by September 30, 1969.

   b. Applications for Comprehensive Planning Assistance (including amendments to current grants) received after September 30, 1969, will not be processed unless a completed initial housing element is appended to the application.

   c. Exception: Planning Agencies applying for the first time after April 1, 1969 will be given six months from the date of their first grant approval to complete an initial housing element.

2. Characteristics of an Initial Housing Element (HUD Requirement)

   An initial housing element must consist of a statement of:

   1) Housing and housing related problems, including those of low income and minority groups.

   2) Obstacles to the solution of housing problems and housing-related problems.

   3) Annual housing objectives tailored to the needs of the planning jurisdiction.

   4) Previous and future housing planning activities.

   5) Previous and future governmental actions to implement housing plans.

   Appendix 2-A, "Initial Housing Element", of HUD provides further details on the required components of housing elements.

From a review of the above it is fair to state that, in general, both the state and federal requirements and guidelines lead toward the same goal - an effective, workable and active housing plan and program - although those of HUD are more explicit. Also, HUD strongly urges that every planning agency do more than the required initial housing element.

This report was developed keeping in mind the requirements and guidelines of the state and federal agencies and the California Chapter of the American Institute of Planners.

E. Housing Plan

Work started on the program with the Planning Commission appointing a citizens housing committee with the approval of the Board of Supervisors. The Citizens Housing Committee consisted of representative members of the community having an interest in housing and knowledge of housing and housing problems in the county. The committee held several meetings with the planning consultant and reviewed the requirements for a housing element and helped to develop the housing element report.

In its examination of county housing problems and related community planning problems the committee and the consultant kept the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors advised on the proceedings; and both the Commission and the Board were requested to participate as much as possible so that a meaningful housing element of the general plan would result. The housing plan follows.

1. Housing Problems

In reviewing the housing problems in Sierra County it became apparent that full knowledge could not be obtained until more up to date information became available. The 1960 census showed that out of a total of 1,460 housing units in the county 129 units or almost 9% were found to be dilapidated, and 346 units or 24% were deteriorated. Almost one-half of all the housing units (646) had been built 30 years or more (by the year 1929 or earlier). A statement of

the housing problems in Sierra County today include the following:

a. Housing generally unfit for acceptable living with sub-standard sanitation and in dilapidated, deteriorated or run-down condition.
b. There is a shortage of rental units and acceptable homes to buy. The rental shortage affects the young families and older persons.
c. Shortage of housing for families in the low income brackets, which prevail in greater percentage in Sierra County.
d. Inadequate water supply systems in the smaller communities.
e. The remoteness of the county discourages building contractors and results in increase in building costs.
f. A minority problem exists for those who pay very little or no rent.
g. Inadequate public facilities.
h. Shortage of available land for building.
i. A large percentage of housing built prior to the year 1940.
j. Houses are rented because they are sub-standard and can't be sold.
k. Low income levels of a great proportion of the people in the county.

2. Housing Obstacles

A preliminary listing of obstacles to the solution of housing and housing-related problems include the following:

a. Inadequate information about the supply and demand for housing.
b. Inadequate information about the present condition of housing.
c. Inadequate planning funds for housing.
d. High construction costs for housing.
e. Inadequate local resources for financing housing.

f. Restrictive residential mortgage and insurance practices.
g. County has a limited tax base and lacks the means to improve public facilities.
h. Overly restrictive eligibility requirements for housing aid.

3. Housing Objectives

A preliminary presentation of housing and housing-related objectives covering a period of three to five years is as follows:

a. Secure data on the condition of housing, and information on the supply and demand for housing.
b. Prepare precise community plans which are closely coordinated with a commercial and industrial development plan.
c. Prepare a county housing plan with recommended actions for responsible agencies. This might be one comprehensive plan or several components for (a) housing sites; (b) financing; (c) replacement and maintenance of existing housing stock; or (d) improving public utilities and facilities.
d. Each year make a review and reappraise the housing situation, and continue with action programs toward housing solutions. Under this program the housing needs in Sierra County will be improved as much as is feasible.

4. Planning Activities

Previous planning activities, related to housing, undertaken by the County of Sierra during the preceding year includes the beginning of work toward a comprehensive general plan for the county which is expected to be completed near the end of the year. Future planning activities, related to housing, to be undertaken over the next three to five years are as follows:

a. Completion and adoption of General Plan.
b. Preparation of county-wide water and sewer plan.
c. Conduct a special census which will include questions on housing condition, rental ranges and ownership and employment and income. Work on this item shall begin in July, 1969 and is estimated to cost $3,000; and it should be completed within several months.

d. Prepare accurate base maps for precise plans and zoning for several communities in the county; using photogrammatic methods, these maps will serve toward other development problem solution including housing, utilities and public facilities. A county-wide zoning map, ordinance and administrative and enforcement procedures will be included. This work should be completed within a year beginning in 1970; and is estimated will cost $26,000.

e. Along with the above zoning program, prepare a detailed work program design for housing to be completed in 1970-71, which is estimated will cost at least $6,000.

f. Survey all available federal, state and local housing tools including legislation, programs and financing.

g. Make more detailed surveys of sub-standard housing as required in order to determine what actions for remedy may be taken.

h. Investigate the possibility of urban renewal programs.

i. Prepare an investigation of the need for a housing authority.

5. Implementing Actions

Previous implementing actions taken during last year to ameliorate housing problems consisted only of the indirect action whereby work was begun on a general plan program for Sierra County. Future implementing actions to be taken over the next three to five years may include the following:

a. Enact a housing ordinance.

b. Create a housing authority.

c. Adopt zoning, land use, subdivision and hillside development standards and controls; and building code enforcement techniques.

6. Annual Performance and Updating of the Housing Element

The County of Sierra will embark upon a continuous planning program and will require planning assistance in the future. Therefore, it is anticipated that the planning program accomplishments and housing element accomplishments will be reviewed annually to determine precisely what revisions or additions to the

programs may be needed. It seems logical at this point (after the housing element has been in effect for a year or two) to concentrate on those real action programs, public and private, which can directly aid in providing good housing for all income levels. Naturally, with changing times and conditions, it may be necessary to refine and update our evaluation of housing problems, obstacles, objectives, planning activities, and implementing actions previously described. Hopefully, the next three to five years may see new legislation and financing in this field.

7. Coordination of the Housing Element with the Total Agency Program

The County of Sierra would hope that in its total planning program, which will include ways and means to broaden the tax base and improve the economy of the county, partial solutions to housing problems may be found in indirect actions such as raising incomes, improving transportation, changing tax policies, changing federal and state policies related to the economy, and other activities, as well as planning and programming for the construction of housing.

8. Coordination of the Housing Element with Existing Housing Work

The housing element will take into account and build upon existing and future planning efforts such as the county may be engaged in, including those federal programs the county may elect to utilize.

9. Inter-Planning Agency Coordination

At the present time Sierra County is not a part of regional council or district; and therefore will coordinate its activities with the appropriate state agencies, including the State Office of Planning, Council on Intergovernmental Relations, and Housing and Community Development.

10. Endorsement by Local Officials

This housing element will be endorsed by the Sierra County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. As a part of the General Plan it will be adopted after public hearings are held on the General Plan are held as required by law. In the future those authorities and officials responsible for county housing policy and implementation will be required to endorse the housing element.